

CROOKED COINS.

Criminal Operations in Doctoring Uncle Sam's Currency.

How Skillful Manipulators Derive Large Profits from Clipping, Sawing, Gouging, Boring and Gilding Gold Pieces.

One of the many unlawful schemes to prostitute the coin of the nation has recently been suppressed by ex-Chief Drummond. It first came to my attention early last year, says a New York Herald writer. I refer to what was known as the "coin sticker," which made possible the extraction of, without discovery, part of the silver in coin. The inventor of this "coin sticker," which was an advertisement printed on paper to be pasted on coins, sold territorial rights to print and use it. The "coin sticker" cost the government a great deal of trouble and expense to suppress. On fifty cent and one dollar coins was pasted the advertisement with a paste of glue which almost defied removal, covering the inscription on the reverse of the coin, deadening the resonance and of course enabling the swindler to take out part of the silver and substitute base metal. Spurious coins of very common workmanship also passed readily with the coin sticker on them.

There is a great increase of late in the number of skillful men who are constantly studying ways and means of stealing a part of the genuine metal from our coins and substituting base metal. One of the most successful swindlers in this line was a man named Wilcox, who was recently taken into custody in Chicago by secret service officers. He made an average income of from fifty to one hundred dollars a day by clipping gold coins. By cutting a rim from around the coin, as a tire might be removed from a wheel, he took away from each twenty-dollar gold piece an amount of gold not exceeding twenty-six or twenty-nine grains in weight, or the value of one dollar. The subsequent reworking of the double eagle, done with a machine, rendered it as perfect as ever to the eye of the casual observer.

The apparatus was small and easily packed, and on reaching a fresh locality all that was required was a quiet room in an obscure street and a supply of gold coin. The latter he secured from the bank. He would deposit a considerable sum of money, and after awhile he would draw it out in gold. The clipped coins were passed by Mrs. Wilcox at dry goods shops monthly.

One of the most interesting processes consists in sawing a double eagle in two through the edge and gouging out the inside, so as to remove about fifteen dollars' worth of gold. Thus the piece is reduced to a hollow shell in halves. It is then filled with platinum, which is nearly as heavy as yellow metal and costs at the present market rates, though this varies, somewhat less than one-half. Lead is too light for the purpose. The cut edge of the

reconstructed coin is disguised by a rim of gold soldered on, and a reeding machine renews the corrugations of the minting. The result is really a work of art, being a combination of five different metals. Only an expert can distinguish anything wrong about it.

A method somewhat similar, though less artistic, is to substitute for the interior portion of a gold piece a core in the shape of a planchet of silver. A better plan, though somewhat laborious, consists in boring into the coin from the edge so as to remove a considerable part of its internal substance. In this manner about seven dollars' worth of gold may be conveniently removed from a twenty-dollar piece, the hole being filled up with a metal composition and soldered at the opening with gold.

Fortunately for the currency, practically all the gold in circulation in the United States passes every few hours through the treasury and subtreasuries. Every piece received at those institutions is weighed, and, if found light in weight, is stamped with a big "L." Such coins are redeemed in bullion. The loss to the government by wear and tear on silver coin in circulation is considerable. It averages three cents on every dollar. Last year it amounted to \$239,293.

The people have not all become familiar with the faces of the new silver coins. The obverse and reverse of the older coins they have known so long and intimately that the draped figure of Liberty and the majestic pose of the eagle are fixed in their mind and always recognized, but the new coins, with changed designs, to which, puzzling them more, were added the Columbus souvenirs, have not yet established their identity.

The manufacturing counterfeiters, quick to discover and take advantage of whatever favors deception, almost immediately followed the government's issue of the coins of new design with their fraudulent issue in likeness of them, and reaped a rich harvest because the originals were known, but not well known.

The gilders—counterfeiters, too—saw in the new twenty-five-cent coin, if gilded, a presentable, beguiling ten-dollar piece, and pocketed a full percentage of profit until discovered. The lack of weight should, of course, and does make known the fraudulent character of the gold coin. This last, the gilders' scheme to falsify coin, as it requires neither skill nor expensive plant, and promises so much for so little, is always a seductive one to the unprincipled or weak of will.

Prices a Century Ago.

One hundred years ago beef sold in New York city at 3½¢d. to 3¾¢d. a pound; mutton, 3½¢d.; veal, 5¼¢d. to 5½¢d.; live pigs, 2¼¢d.; butter, 1s. 1¼¢d.; new milk, 3½¢d. to 3¾¢d. a quart; chickens, 10d. to 1s.; hay, 42 5s. to 42 10s. 3d. a ton; wheat, 5s. 7¼¢d. a bushel; barley, 3s. 1½¢d.; corn, 2s. 9¼¢d.; rye, 3s. 1¼¢d.; oats, 1s. 8¼¢d. The average yield of wheat per acre in the state then was 12 bushels of corn, 25 bushels and of buckwheat 15 bushels.

AMERICANS AND DIAMONDS.

They Buy More Than the People of Europe.

It is claimed that Americans buy more diamonds than any other people. They have always worn more, and at all times of day, in and out of season, so they were a reproach to their English cousins in the early days of social intercourse. But American women's diamond earrings worn early in the morning, though decried by conservative Britishers, had the power to change the standard of dress. Ridiculed as they were, the Americans won the day, and soon European dames began to wear their jewels in the street and on all possible occasions. A craze for diamonds spread over society, and not only family heirlooms but much new jewelry employing these once rare stones, and bought dirt cheap, became a feature of the daily toilette. Of course, when fashion took a hand in the business, the diamond market boomed and syndicates talked very loud and big of the fields where the sparklers bloomed perennially. The real gem entailed the imitation, and rhinestones, as well as the almost-impossible-to-detect paste from the Rue de la Paix and the Palais Royale have had a tremendous vogue, but, as demand increases supply, the diamond syndicates were equal to the occasion, and "real stones" could be purchased for a little more than the false ones. The result has been that everybody has worn some sort of a diamond. In this country the craze has grown into a cult. Tiaras gleam on the brows of the wives of millionaires. Necklaces worth a prince's ransom are bought by anybody who has money to pay for them. Brooches, pins, bracelets, starred with the gems, are so common a woman must plaster herself with them to be observed. Every girl "just engaged" exhibits a diamond ring, and it has developed a vein of humor, if not a new class of joke, that much envied gage d'amour. The nice young man who polishes your boots for a nickel wears a "diamond" in a not too fresh neck scarf, and the gentlemanly car conductor is not above ornamenting his little finger with an off colored African stone! In fact, where there is the least excuse for jewelry, one may be certain the preference will be given to the diamond kind.

NOISELESS ROYSTERERS.

The Whoopless Spruce Indulged In by a Trio of Mutes.

Three men went out on a quiet drunk the other night, says the Kansas City Times. They drank early and often. In the descriptive parlance of the north end they "made a night of it." Unlike the majority of men, the more intoxicated they became the less they "talked." They were mutes, all three of them, deaf mutes. They visited the saloons of the north end and imbibed copious libations of the extract of malt. They lined up before a bar and chatted to each other on their finger ends, and drank and smiled and smiled and smiled. Words were written in the air with startling rapidity early in the